

World Bank Ignores Ethiopia's Land Grabbing

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Journalists Martin Schibbye and Johan Persson were imprisoned in Ethiopia during the production of “Dead Donkeys Fear no Hyenas,” a documentary which reveals land grabbing in Ethiopia.

(*Arbetet* Global)—Sales of huge land areas of Ethiopia, by the Ethiopian government, to foreign investors, have led to starvation and forced displacement. In his documentary *Dead Donkeys Fear no Hyenas*, Swedish film director Joakim Demmer exposes the consequences of land grabbing, and holds the World Bank complicit.

The chase for this Green Gold started over ten years ago. Just before the global financial crisis, agricultural land areas in developing countries became a target for investment among global investors.

Joakim Demmer experienced at first hand at the [Addis Ababa airport](#) how emergency food supplies was being unloaded while local food produce was being loaded for export.

“It was so odd. I started reading up on the subject and became aware of the extent foreign investors were striking deals all over the country.”

Pursuing this land grabbing story took him to a local journalist covering environmental issues at an early stage, who directed his attention to the Gambela National Park. Together they discovered that investors Saudi Star Agricultural Development had begun the development of a rice farm.

In order to make the sale to investors, the [Ethiopian government](#) displaced the local population.

“Our thoughts were of how we could follow this over an extended time period, so we would return several times”

“My definition of land grabbing is when transnational companies seize public lands in developemnt countries without permission from local communities and without compensation. In Ethiopia this land grabbing is also done by force. People do not voluntarily move from their homes.”

Conditions for following the story were difficult. That is why the documentary was a full seven years in the making.

“Ethiopia is in reality a dictatorship even if there are elections. The governmental apparatus is everywhere. If four Ethiopians gather in one place, at least one of them will report to the secret police. So right from the start, we had to ask ourselves whether we could report this story without compromising the safety of others.”

During the documentary process, Swedish journalists Martin Schibbye and Johan Persson were imprisoned in Ethiopia. Joakim Demmer continued to film, below the radar of the [Ethiopian regime](#).

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